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Abbott Study Finds Targeted Nutrition Support Boosts Growth and Lean Mass in Indian Children

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The trial, published in the journals Children and Journal of Clinical Medicine, included 223 Indian children between ages 3 to 7 years with picky eating habits who were undernourished or at risk of undernutrition

ABBOTT

Abbott, the global healthcare leader, announced findings from a randomized controlled trial showing that Indian children at risk of undernutrition who received an oral nutritional supplement alongside dietary counseling experienced significantly improved growth outcomes. Children in the supplemented group had approximately 2.4 times greater height gain and nearly 15 per cent higher lean mass over six months compared to those receiving dietary counseling alone.

The trial, published in the journals Children and Journal of Clinical Medicine, included 223 Indian children between ages 3 to 7 years with picky eating habits who were undernourished or at risk of undernutrition.

Over six months, families and children in the study received dietary counseling, with approximately half of the children also receiving two daily servings of PediaSure, an Abbott pediatric oral nutritional supplement. Investigators assessed growth, dietary intake, body composition and other health indicators at predefined intervals.

Body composition and bone health were evaluated using dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), a gold-standard imaging-based measurement technique that enables precise measurement of lean mass, fat mass and bone mineralization. Lean mass refers to muscle, bone, organs and all body components except body fat.

Quality physical growth and improved bone health indicators: Children in the supplemented group showed improvements in height, weight and lean mass without excess fat accumulation in terms of BMI for age and DXA measurements. DXA further confirmed an increase in bone mineral density (35 per cent) and bone mineral content.

Catch-up growth: Children at risk for undernutrition who received the supplement showed up to 4x greater gains in weightâ??forâ??age and heightâ??forâ??age percentiles over six months compared to those receiving dietary counseling alone. A percentile shows how a child is growing compared to other children of the same age. These improvements indicate faster movement toward healthier growth trajectories, demonstrating stronger catch-up growth.

Higher lean mass gains: Children in the supplemented group gained more lean mass, reflecting improvements in muscle and overall body strength as part of healthy growth.

Improved dietary intake: Children who received the supplement had higher energy, carbohydrate and protein intake at three months, with sustained improvements at six months. They also showed greater improvements in mid-upper arm circumference percentile, a marker of improved nutritional status.

“This research highlights the importance of addressing undernutrition early with targeted nutrition support,” said Dr. Anuradha Khadilkar, Consultant Pediatrician, Jehangir Clinical Development Center Pvt. Ltd., Pune, India, and lead investigator on the study. “What is especially meaningful is that benefits extended beyond visible growth measures to include lean mass and bone health, offering a broader picture of healthy growth in children at nutritional risk.”

“This study adds to growing evidence that targeted nutritional support can help children at nutritional risk achieve healthy growth,” said Dr. Priti Thakor, Director Medical & Scientific Affairs for Abbott’s nutrition business in India. “Importantly, the findings highlight improvements not only in height and weight, but also in lean mass and bone health, providing a more comprehensive view of growth outcomes.”